

Narratives of participation among individuals with physical disabilities:

Allan, Veronica; Smith, Brett; Côté, Jean; Martin Ginis, Kathleen A.; Latimer-Cheung, Amy E.

DOI:

[10.1016/j.psychsport.2017.10.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2017.10.004)

License:

Creative Commons: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs (CC BY-NC-ND)

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

Citation for published version (Harvard):

Allan, V, Smith, B, Côté, J, Martin Ginis, KA & Latimer-Cheung, AE 2017, 'Narratives of participation among individuals with physical disabilities: A life-course analysis of athletes' experiences and development in parasport', *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2017.10.004>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

Publisher Rights Statement:

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2017.10.004>

General rights

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

Take down policy

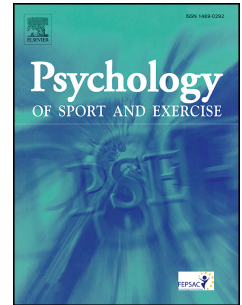
While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.

Accepted Manuscript

Narratives of participation among individuals with physical disabilities: A life-course analysis of athletes' experiences and development in parasport

Veronica Allan, Brett Smith, Jean Côté, Kathleen A. Martin Ginis, Amy E. Latimer-Cheung



PII: S1469-0292(17)30348-5

DOI: [10.1016/j.psychsport.2017.10.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2017.10.004)

Reference: PSYSPO 1276

To appear in: *Psychology of Sport & Exercise*

Received Date: 1 June 2017

Revised Date: 3 October 2017

Accepted Date: 4 October 2017

Please cite this article as: Allan, V., Smith, B., Côté, J., Martin Ginis, K.A., Latimer-Cheung, A.E., Narratives of participation among individuals with physical disabilities: A life-course analysis of athletes' experiences and development in parasport, *Psychology of Sport & Exercise* (2017), doi: 10.1016/j.psychsport.2017.10.004.

This is a PDF file of an unedited manuscript that has been accepted for publication. As a service to our customers we are providing this early version of the manuscript. The manuscript will undergo copyediting, typesetting, and review of the resulting proof before it is published in its final form. Please note that during the production process errors may be discovered which could affect the content, and all legal disclaimers that apply to the journal pertain.

Narratives of participation among individuals with physical disabilities: A life-course analysis of athletes' experiences and development in parasport

Veronica Allan¹, Brett Smith², Jean Côté¹, Kathleen A. Martin Ginis³, and Amy E. Latimer-Cheung¹

¹School of Kinesiology & Health Studies, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada

²School of Sport, Exercise & Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, United Kingdom

³School of Health & Exercise Science, University of British Columbia, Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada

Author Note

Veronica Allan, School of Kinesiology & Health Studies, Queen's University; Brett Smith, School of Sport, Exercise & Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Birmingham; Jean Côté, School of Kinesiology & Health Studies, Queen's University; Kathleen A. Martin Ginis, School of Health & Exercise Science, University of British Columbia; Amy E. Latimer-Cheung, School of Kinesiology & Health Studies, Queen's University.

As a part of the Canadian Disability Participation Project, this research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) – Grant # 895-2013-1021. This research was also supported by a SSHRC Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship awarded to Veronica Allan – Award # 767-2015-1633.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Veronica Allan, School of Kinesiology & Health Studies, Queen's University, 28 Division St., Kingston, Ontario, Canada,

K7L 3N6. E-mail: 7vra@queensu.ca

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23

**Narratives of participation among individuals with physical disabilities: A life-course
analysis of athletes' experiences and development in parasport**

Abstract

Objectives: Efforts to promote full participation in parasport are vital not only for the potential physical and psychosocial benefits, but also as a means of enacting social justice. Until recently, there has been little empirical consideration of the experiential aspects that make participation satisfying or meaningful throughout the life-course. The purpose of this study was to explore the meanings that athletes with physical disabilities attribute to their participation in parasport over time.

Method: Two-part life history interviews were conducted with 21 current or former athletes with a physical disability. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and subjected to a dialogical narrative analysis, which enabled an in-depth examination of the common stories told by athletes and the effects of these stories on their past, present, and future participation.

Results: Five distinct narrative types were identified, representing differential developmental trajectories and meanings of participation in parasport. Athletes drew on existing narratives of disability (i.e., restitution, quest) and sport involvement (i.e., performance, discovery, relational) to frame these narrative types. The core of each narrative type was formed by the specific meaning or value associated with parasport participation (e.g., sense of purpose, social acceptance).

Conclusion: The resulting narratives offer a unique understanding of the developmental pathways of parasport athletes and what it means for these athletes to participate. The narratives are useful for informing strategies and programmes that optimize participation and enhance participation rates.

Keywords: Development, disability, narrative, parasport, participation

Narratives of participation among individuals with physical disabilities: A life-course analysis of athletes' experiences and development in parasport

Over the past several years, research on disability has received growing attention in the field of sport psychology. While participation in sport may offer a variety of potential physical and psychosocial benefits (e.g., Slater & Meade, 2004), sport participation rates among people with disabilities remain much lower than rates reported by their able-bodied counterparts (e.g., Martin Ginis et al., 2010; Sport England, 2016). Efforts to promote full participation in sport are vital not only for the potential benefits. Recent calls within sport psychology (Schinke, Stambulova, Lidor, Papaioannou, & Ryba, 2016) and research with disabled athletes (Smith, Bundon, & Best, 2016) has also emphasized the significance of understanding participation in terms of social justice. Supporting these calls, the United Nations (2006) has declared that individuals with a disability have a basic right to “full and effective participation” in society, including in sport. According to the World Health Organization (2001), participation is defined as an individual's involvement in life situations. Expanding this definition, full and effective participation considers both the quantity and quality of an individual's participation (Hammel et al., 2008; Martin Ginis, Evans, Mortenson & Noreau, 2017). In other words, an individual is fully and effectively participating when he or she engages in an activity to the extent to which he or she pleases (quantity) and has a positive subjective experience (quality).

In order to promote full and effective participation in sport and determine whether people with a disability experience this basic right, researchers must focus their attention on both the quantity and quality of participation. Although there is a growing body of literature focused on athletes with disabilities, there is very little research focused on the quality of athletes' participation in parasport (e.g., Turnnidge, Vierimaa, & Côté, 2012). To date, significant

resources have been dedicated to understanding the barriers and facilitators associated with physical activity participation, highlighting factors at the intrapersonal (e.g., self-perceptions, body functions), interpersonal (e.g., social support, societal attitudes), institutional (e.g., rehabilitation, building design), community (e.g., products and technology for education, sport, etc.), and policy (e.g., health, transportation) levels (Martin Ginis, Ma, Latimer-Cheung, & Rimmer, 2016). As demonstrated, a complex and extensive array of barriers have the potential to preclude participation in parasport. However, without knowledge of what quality means or how quality is experienced over time in parasport, our understanding of how to develop and deliver quality sport programmes for people with disabilities will remain limited. It is therefore vital that researchers address the knowledge gap concerned with the quality of participation in parasport.

According to Martin Ginis and colleagues (2017), a holistic operationalization of participation should encompass “the meanings and satisfactions that an individual derives from participating” (p. 2). These authors completed a configurative review of the participation literature focused on individuals with physical disabilities in which six common themes were identified and recommended for inclusion in future conceptualizations of participation. These themes include: autonomy – having independence, choice, or control; belongingness – a sense of belonging or acceptance in a group; challenge – feeling appropriately challenged; engagement – feeling engaged, focused, and motivated; mastery – experiencing achievement, competence, and self-confidence; and meaning – contributing towards obtaining a personal or socially-meaningful goal (Martin Ginis et al., 2017).

Although the quality of participation has yet to be examined explicitly within parasport contexts, efforts to understand the sport and physical activity experiences of individuals with physical disabilities have emerged in recent years. For example, Turnnidge and colleagues

(2012) interviewed swimmers in an acclaimed swim program for youth with disabilities. Swimmers discussed how their participation in the program contributed to redefined capabilities, an affirmed sense of self, strengthened social connections, and enhanced acceptance (Turnnidge et al., 2012). Outside of the youth sport context, more recent work has examined the quality of physical activity experiences among military veterans with a physical disability – highlighting challenge, group cohesion, individual roles, and independence and choice as key contributors to quality experiences while participating in physical activity (Shirazipour et al., 2017). Thematic overlap between these findings and themes identified within the participation literature offer support for the conceptualization of participation proposed by Martin Ginis et al. (2017).

One methodological approach that has been used to understand the diverse, complex, and nuanced lives of athletes with disabilities is narrative inquiry. By viewing people as storytelling beings, narrative inquiry is a tradition of qualitative research that uses stories to understand life experiences and assist in the production of meaning (Sparkes & Smith, 2014; Smith & Sparkes, 2009). To demonstrate, narratives have been used to understand athletic identity after acquiring a permanent physical disability (Perrier, Smith, Strachan, & Latimer-Cheung, 2014), the role of sport in promoting posttraumatic growth following permanent acquired disability (Day & Wadey, 2016), and meanings of hope after experiencing a spinal cord injury through sport (Smith & Sparkes, 2005). Day (2013) highlights physical activity participation as an arena for meaning-making after acquiring a permanent physical disability. In telling stories, people make meaning and communicate in intelligible ways to other people; thus, the telling of stories helps athletes to make better sense of their participation and share personal knowledge about it. In telling such personal life stories, people also shape their identities and the ways in which they choose to participate. For example, the identities formed through the stories that people tell after

acquiring a permanent physical disability can either impede or facilitate the trauma recovery process (Day, 2013; Day & Wadey, 2016).

For these reasons, narrative inquiry may offer a useful medium for the communication and interpretation of athletes' personal stories about their participation in parasport – enabling in-depth perspectives on the elements that contribute to meaningful parasport experiences. Considering the relative dearth of literature focusing on the quality of athletes' participation in parasport, the purpose of this study was to explore the meanings that current and former athletes with physical disabilities attribute to their participation, and the quality of this participation, in parasport over time. Using a narrative approach, we sought to address the following objectives: (a) to explore and typify narrative types that athletes with physical disabilities draw on from culture to represent their participation in parasport, and (b) examine the meanings and conditions that shape parasport participation over time within each narrative type.

Methodology and Methods

Narrative Inquiry

Within narrative inquiry, people are viewed as meaning-making creatures, and a crucial way to make meaning, as well as communicate these meanings, is through stories (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). This research was underpinned by two assumptions: ontological relativism (i.e., reality is multiple, subjective, and mind-dependent) and epistemological constructionism (i.e., knowledge is subjective and socially constructed) (Sparkes & Smith, 2016). We adopted narrative constructionism as the specific methodology – a socio-cultural approach that conceptualizes human beings as storytellers who draw on the narratives made available to us through social relations and culture (Smith, 2015). As such, narratives are broad cultural resources that can be classified as a certain type (e.g., “rags to riches”) that is crucial for helping

to structure our personal stories, make meaning, and communicate experiences. Narrative inquiry considers language to be constructive, meaning that stories constitute our psychological realities (e.g., Smith et al., 2016). Thus, the stories athletes tell about their participation in parasport may offer key insights into the subjective or experiential aspects of participation, as well as the broader social and cultural resources that inform such perspectives. Language also offers a performative function (Wiggins & Potter, 2008). The stories we tell are not merely passive representations of our thoughts, attitudes, feelings, or actions; rather, storied language provides a medium for action (Frank, 2010; Smith, 2015). Through language we are able to accomplish “social actions and realities” (Atkinson, 2015, p. 93) with the potential for both individual and broad societal impact (e.g., full and effective participation; United Nations, 2006).

Participants and Sampling

After obtaining ethics approval, participants were recruited using maximum variation and criterion-based purposive sampling strategies (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). While maximum variation sampling enabled a broad range of perspectives concerning the factors that comprise or shape participation in parasport activities, criterion-based sampling ensured that participants shared certain attributes that made them eligible for this study. Specifically, we sought the views of Canadian men and women, 18 years of age or older, with congenital or acquired physical disabilities and experience (i.e., a minimum of one season) participating in parasport. Parasport was further operationalized to include competition and/or training for the purposes of competition as an individual or on a team at any competitive level, from recreational to elite.

Using publically available contact information via the Canadian Paralympic Committee’s online database, the first author contacted parasport clubs and organizations via e-mail. Contacted individuals (e.g., coaches, administrators) were asked to forward a letter of

information about the study to athletes who met the criteria for inclusion. Interested athletes were asked to contact the first author directly. Twenty-one people met the criteria for inclusion and agreed to participate, including 9 women and 12 men ranging in age from 19 to 73 ($M = 33.7$, $SD = 14.5$). Nearly all of the participants identified as Caucasian, while one participant identified as biracial. Approximately one-third of the sample was comprised of individuals with congenital physical disabilities, such as cerebral palsy, spina bifida, and muscular dystrophy ($n = 6$). The remaining participants included individuals with acquired physical disabilities, including amputation, spinal cord injury, and other impairments ($n = 15$). Years post-injury for individuals with acquired disabilities ranged from 2 to 35, with a mean of 12.3 years ($SD = 9.6$). On average, participants had been involved in sport (able-bodied or adapted) for 20.8 years ($SD = 15.0$, range = 2-54), and parasport for 10.9 years ($SD = 8.9$, range = 2-35). Past and current participation in parasport ranged across a variety of sport types, including individual (i.e., adapted waterskiing, boccia, hand-cycling, para-alpine, para-archery, para-athletics, para-nordic, para-rowing, para-swimming, para-triathlon) and team sports (i.e., power wheelchair hockey, sitting volleyball, sledge hockey, wheelchair basketball, wheelchair curling, wheelchair rugby).

Data Collection

Each participant took part in a retrospective life history interview consisting of two independent sessions. Life histories, or “the unfolding of an individual’s experiences over time” (p. 82), seek to situate personal stories in relation to broader social context (e.g., concepts, norms, practices; Schwandt, 1997). With an explicit focus on the relationship between storytelling and broader socio-cultural resources, life history interviews are well suited to a narrative approach. A two-session format was chosen to address each of our research objectives: First, to explore narrative structure in relation to participants’ experiences of parasport

participation (i.e., the “plotline”), and second, to examine the specific meanings and influential factors captured within each participant’s story.

In the first session, the interviewer and participant worked collaboratively to co-create a physical timeline of the participant’s sport and/or parasport involvement (Adriansen, 2012). Using banner paper and writing utensils, the participant either recorded or guided the researcher in recording specific activities, important moments, and major life transitions or milestones experienced by the participant in relation to sport and/or parasport involvement throughout the life course. For each activity that was recorded on the timeline, the interviewer asked specific questions about the nature of the activity (e.g., “How often did you take part in this activity?”, “What was the (competitive) level of your participation, and when did it change?”, “Tell me about the reasons you started/stopped participating in this activity”, “How did participation in this activity make you feel?”). At the end of the first session, participants were asked to reflect on the activities included on their timeline using probes such as “Tell me about the activities that meant the most/least to you”. For interviews conducted in person, this timeline was retained and used as a tool to facilitate recall and stimulate discussion during the second session (Adriansen, 2012). Alternatively, the timeline was converted into an electronic format and e-mailed to the participant to be verified and used as a reference during online or phone interviews.

The second session was conducted within two weeks of the first, allowing time for the participants to reflect on their timeline. An open-ended interview guide was used to elicit key information concerning the activities, relationships, environments, and outcomes associated with key experiences represented on their timeline. For example, participants were asked questions such as: “What would you consider to be an ideal parasport environment?”, “Who would you consider to be the most influential person in shaping your parasport involvement?”, “How did

you feel when you were engaged in [parasport activity]?", and "What were the most valued elements of your experiences in parasport?" The interview guide was adapted from the work of Shirazipour et al. (2017). Follow-up questions were used to supplement the interview guide and elicit rich data, providing opportunities for explanation and elaboration (Sparkes & Smith, 2014).

Interviews were conducted in person at the preferred location of the participant ($n = 7$), as well as over the phone ($n = 4$) or using online interfaces such as Skype ($n = 10$) to accommodate participants from diverse geographical locations. Informed written consent was obtained either in person or by asking participants to scan and e-mail the signed consent form back to the first author. Verbal consent was also confirmed prior to beginning each interview. While some non-verbal cues (e.g., facial expression, body language) may be lost during online audiovisual or phone interviews, opportunities to interpret other cues (e.g., tone of voice, cadence of speech) remain present (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Furthermore, comparisons between face-to-face and telephone interviews have demonstrated that both modes of interviewing enable rich interview data and capture a similar level of detail (Cachia & Millward, 2011). By including two interview sessions, the interviewer was provided with extended opportunities to enhance participant rapport – regardless of the medium used to perform the interview. On average, 127 minutes (~2 hours) of audio were recorded per participant across the two-session interviews.

Data Analysis

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Subsequently, a dialogical narrative analysis was performed. A dialogical narrative analysis "studies the mirroring between what is told in the story – the story's content – and what happens as a result of telling that story – its effects" (Frank, 2010, p. 71-72). As described by Frank (2012) and Smith (2015), the following steps were used to guide the analysis. First, a period of indwelling was carried out.

Indwelling involved reading over the interview transcripts while listening to the corresponding audio recordings and writing down preliminary notes. The objective of the second step was to sketch out a prototypical life course or “plotline” for each participant’s life history, which involved identifying thematic foci (i.e., factors comprising or influencing participation in parasport) and dynamics of the plot (e.g., direction – stability, decline, or progress; tone – positive or negative; language – at a ‘turning point’ or ‘crossroads’), as well as narrative resources that may have been used to help structure the story. The third step focused on identifying narrative themes and thematic relationships. By taking a more in-depth look at the thematic foci of each narrative, the factors that shaped athletes’ experiences in parasport were examined for common threads or patterns over the course of each life history.

Throughout the analysis, the technique of analytical bracketing was used to focus separately and exclusively on structure (i.e., how the narrative was constructed over time) and content (i.e., what was told in the narrative). By first focusing on the structure of each narrative and subsequently returning to each narrative with a thematic lens, similarities and differences between participants could be viewed according to the narrative typologies that were constructed as a whole (e.g., Perrier et al., 2014; Smith & Sparkes, 2012). This approach enabled a more profound understanding of the meanings participants attached to their experiences in parasport.

Methodological Rigour

Consistent with ontological relativism and epistemological constructionism, a flexible list of criteria was developed to evaluate this research (Sparkes & Smith, 2014; Smith & McGannon, 2017). In other words, the criteria for judging the quality of this research were not viewed as universal or concrete, but rather could be drawn from a dynamic list of relevant traits (Smith & Deemer, 2000). Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) proposed four criteria for

evaluating narrative research, which formed the foundation for our list: width (i.e., comprehensiveness of the interview), coherence (i.e., constructing a meaningful picture of participants' experiences), parsimony (i.e., a coherent analysis based on a smaller number of concepts that has aesthetic appeal for readers), and insightfulness (i.e., originality in the story presented). Alongside these criteria, two additional items were added to the list: reflexivity and rich rigour (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Several strategies and techniques were used to achieve these criteria. Width was sought through comprehensive two-part life history interviews, designed to encourage reflection and expansion on key experiences. Participants were allowed to reflect on their interview transcripts and our analytical interpretations to encourage continued interpretation and collaboration (Smith & McGannon, 2017). Both coherence and parsimony were sought too by situating our findings within the broader participation literature; specifically, by organizing the narratives around thematic elements linked to existing conceptualizations of participation (Lieblich et al., 1998). To demonstrate insightfulness, we aimed to provide a novel research question grounded in the individual stories of a diverse range of participants (e.g., Perrier et al., 2014). Finally, the first author engaged in reflexive journaling throughout the research to explore and critically reflect on prior assumptions or biases and ongoing interpretations of the data, while the second author acted as a "critical friend" – a "theoretical sounding board" during the analytical process (Sparkes & Smith, 2014, p. 182).

Results

Five distinct narrative types were identified, representing and constituting differential developmental trajectories and experiences of participation in parasport. For each narrative type, the results are presented as follows: (a) demographic details of participants, (b) a brief summary of the narrative, (c) a temporal description of participants' parasport trajectory, including the

elements and conditions that foster the quantity and quality of participation over time, and (d) an interpretation of meanings associated with quality participation. To conclude this section, one overarching theme spanning across the five narrative types is described.

A Cinderella Story

Six of the life histories represented a narrative type named ‘a Cinderella story’. The participants who told this type of story were predominantly women with congenital disabilities or impairments acquired at a young age (i.e., ages 12-14). The women who drew on ‘a Cinderella story’ described their early sport and parasport experiences in terms of a relational narrative. In a relational narrative, personal satisfaction is not dependent on the fulfillment of one’s own needs or sense of self; rather, this narrative is centered on interpersonal relations and the need to satisfy other people (Douglas & Carless, 2006; Lieblich et al., 1998). With opportunities for personal growth and development, the relational narrative was eventually replaced by a narrative of discovery – which focuses on exploring, discovering, and experiencing life in a full and multidimensional sense (Douglas & Carless, 2006). The overarching story told by these participants can be described as follows: “Without parasport, I wouldn’t be who I am today. Participation has empowered me to accept my disability, overcome my fears, and live life to the fullest.” For example, Joanne describes how her life changed when she got involved in parasport:

When I was 12 the doctor said I’d never play sports again... So, from the age of 12 to the age of 20 there was no sport at all. And you know I didn’t even want to look at somebody with a disability because people were portrayed as, they weren’t, people with disabilities back then weren’t in the media or you didn’t see any Paralympic sports or anything like that so nobody really knew... But being involved in sport has brought out my confidence... you’re meeting new people; you’re trying something new. If you fall, you try it again and the encouragement with all my people, at the [parasport venue] with my new group of friends was like a life changing moment. Because if it wasn’t for that, I sure wouldn’t be the person I am today.

The plotline for participants in ‘a Cinderella story’ was driven along two main axes: the desire for social acceptance and emerging independence. All of these participants were

introduced to sport as children (e.g., ages 6-12). Those who were born with disabilities – Anna, Danielle, and Isabelle – began participating in gym classes and ‘pick-up’ sports with able-bodied peers and siblings. These participants described feeling out of place in their early sport experiences, often unable to fully participate (e.g., keeping score instead of playing). They were not presented with opportunities to take part in parasport until they were older (e.g., ages 12-16), facilitated by local coaches or teachers. Quinn, Sylvie, and Joanne, on the other hand, recalled the fun and enjoyment of organized sports as able-bodied children. Following rehabilitation post-injury (ages 14-16), Quinn and Sylvie returned to sport participation with able-bodied peers; however, they struggled with anxiety and confidence regarding their abilities. At the age of 12, Joanne was told by her doctors that she would never play sports again. For many of these women, the transition into parasport was not easy. Several participants lacked financial or social support that hindered or prevented early parasport involvement, while other personal experiences (e.g., physical or mental illness) also reduced the capacity for and quality of participation.

Opportunities for personal growth – such as attending postsecondary school or taking on new roles (e.g., coaching) – provided an important catalyst for change during the transition from adolescence to adulthood (e.g., ages 17-20). Participants were able to realize their own needs and desires, culminating in a personal decision to engage or re-engage with parasport in new and meaningful ways. For example, after living independently for the first time, Anna describes her decision to return to her former parasport club:

I was in the gym and this old man came up to me and said, “have you heard of [parasport club]?” And I’m like, “yeah I was on it before, you know when I was younger, but I quit ‘cause I was just, there was just so much going on I couldn’t do it anymore” and he’s like, “well you should go back on it” ... So I went home and I gave it some thought and I, I messaged [coach] and I’m like, “is there any way I could come back on the swim team?” ... I still had a lot of the skills that [coach] taught me... um the goal wasn’t to make nationals standard, or really any standard until the next year but I made it from regional to provincial to national all in one year... It was just the maturity level and the

motivation, I think it became a better experience than it was before and you know meeting new people with similar issues it was, it made it more fun...

Participation empowered athletes with something they had control over, a support network or 'sport family', and new goals to work toward. Participants had fulfilled their personal needs for *autonomy* and *belongingness*, allowing other elements, such as *challenge* and *mastery*, to be introduced into the narrative. For each of these women, their development in parasport led to a major transition in the way they viewed themselves both as athletes and as people with disabilities. Internalization of the values and beliefs they learned or developed through parasport (e.g., self-confidence, openness, acceptance) transcended into the motivations that frame their everyday lives; thus, participation in parasport created an avenue for more fruitful social participation. These women developed a sense of pride in themselves, their sport, and their disability, which translated into a desire to inspire others and create awareness through their own parasport participation and involvement in disability awareness initiatives.

From Ordinary to Extraordinary

Four of the life histories drew on a narrative type described as 'from ordinary to extraordinary'. The participants who told these stories were all men with congenital physical disabilities or impairments acquired early in life (i.e., before age 10). After getting involved in competitive parasport, the men who developed a 'from ordinary to extraordinary' story framed their stories of quality through a performance narrative. The traditional performance narrative encompasses a unidimensional and self-oriented focus on winning, competition, and gaining social esteem (Douglas & Carless, 2006). The story told by these participants can be described as follows: "I used to participate so that I could have fun and fit in, but now it's because I know I can be one of the best – parasport has become my life's purpose, and shown me that anything is possible". For example, Zack describes his development in parasport:

So when I started, I was, I was just a kid... I wanted to be like everybody else, as did my parents. So they threw me in sport, because that's what everybody's kid did, and they wanted me to be active... I felt, quote-unquote, normal. Because I was being active, I was, I was doing something, I was performing at a high level, I was doing something that not everybody else could do. And so there is a little bit of that too, right? It's like I can do this and not everybody can... It's awesome. It's freeing. Like I don't know about you, but when I would play [parasport], everything else would disappear...all my worries, all my fears, all my thoughts just disappeared and became about [parasport], and I was free, and I was happy... So as I got older, I realized that sport played, in my formative years, I have sport to thank for that for me, and sport really shaped my, my mindset and my view of the world because I don't see myself any differently from, like I don't see myself any different from you... So that was, that was my motivation for sport in particular as I got older, because I realized it would serve me later in life.

In the narrative 'from ordinary to extraordinary', early parasport involvement (e.g., ages 6-12) was facilitated by the notion of leading an 'ordinary' childhood. Parents played a key role in creating access to participants' first experiences in parasport, allowing them to participate in a variety of activities with the goal of developing 'normal' physical and social skills. As children, participants were motivated to participate so that they could have fun and fit in with the other kids. At this point in the narrative, participation offered opportunities for *belongingness* and *engagement*. Participants enjoyed making connections with similar others (i.e., people with disabilities) and simultaneously feeling like an ordinary (able-bodied) kid. Alternatively, the experience of being engaged in parasport activities was described as liberating and freeing; a chance to forget that disability even exists. A turning point occurred during adolescence (e.g., ages 12-16), when the young athletes, whose frame of reference for elite sport was limited to the able-bodied, were recognized for their skill and presented with an opportunity to compete at a higher level. Accompanying the realization that an elite career in parasport was possible, participants described newfound experiences of *challenge* and *mastery*. The development of confidence and expertise appeared particularly important for generating motivation and

heightened performance goals, which were often centered around winning and status. As Leo describes:

Once I started keeping with it, I started getting better and it just kind of enhanced those skills even more like, as I would get better at workouts I would have more confidence in myself which helped me push through those tough work outs...competing against able-bodied athletes I was always just trying to beat them, and that's kind of what pushed me to get better it's just trying to be the best.

From this point forward, the participants' steady upward progress was fashioned around a single axis: parasport performance. As the athletes continued to progress, the ultimate dream became a quest to be the best and achieve national representation.

Despite demonstrating a passion for parasport that persisted from childhood involvement to the elite level, the *meaning* of participation for these individuals changed alongside their transition to more competitive parasport involvement. Early on, quality parasport experiences allowed the athlete to feel 'normal' – participating in parasport meant fitting in, making friends, and doing what the other children were doing. Access to new challenges and competition, the experience of mastery, and recognition or support from a higher authority engendered a personal stake in parasport performance. At this stage, participation afforded athletes with a sense of purpose (e.g., representing Canada on the international stage) and a strong athletic identity. Competition (and the right to compete) was vitally important: Participation in parasport meant more than simply playing for fun, it meant proving oneself as a superior athlete. Moving beyond the 'ordinary', participation in parasport enabled an "anything is possible" approach to life.

Holding On

Three of the life histories exemplified a narrative type termed 'holding on'. The participants who told this story were one woman and two men with physical disabilities that were acquired during adolescence or early adulthood (i.e., ages 15-25). The 'holding on'

narrative can be summarized as follows: “Yesterday I was an able-bodied athlete, today I am an athlete with a disability, but tomorrow I will simply be an *athlete*”. This narrative type is based on the original restitution narrative by Frank (1995), which has been translated into the lives of men with spinal cord injuries by Smith and Sparkes (2005). In the sport context, this narrative intersects with a performance narrative (Douglas & Carless, 2006) such that the participants held onto their identities as high performance athletes – framing their lives around sport, competition, and winning – as a means of recovering their able-bodied identity or self after acquiring a disability. For example, Morley describes his return to sport post-injury:

I didn't wanna give up on it. Um there were a lot of factors that were kind of playing against me um getting back into it, and I just, I wasn't done with it. I wasn't able to um you know, I didn't leave [sport] on my own terms obviously, it was kind of taken away from me, and so I didn't want to allow that to happen 'cause the enjoyment that I was getting out of [sport], I hadn't really, I didn't really see an end to it yet and so I wanted to do whatever I could to try and get back into it... At this stage in the game my sights are definitely set on the Paralympics in Rio, and so that's kind of where all my focus is going right now um but it's [the Olympic team is] definitely in the back of my mind... the big question is whether or not my body can handle the training loads that the able bodied team is doing um but again that comes back to me, right now, making sure that I'm doing the best job that I can um so that I can prepare myself for what they're doing, you know, in a year from now.

Participants in the narrative ‘holding on’ were constantly in pursuit of a higher goal despite facing inevitable setbacks over time. As aspiring able-bodied athletes throughout adolescence and early adulthood (e.g., ages 14-24), these participants were self-oriented, highly motivated, and focused on personal goals. During this time, participants expressed strong ties to their athletic identities and craved physical challenge; they felt autonomous, focused, confident, and skilled in the able-bodied sport domain. Each of these athletes sustained an injury that resulted in a physical disability, creating a common crisis in the plotline of the narrative (ages 15-25). Participants responded to initial personal doubts with an unwavering faith in their athletic identity and began participating in parasport soon after injury (within six months). During his

time in rehabilitation, Roscoe stated, “I was introduced to so many different things and I wanted to do all of them...I was like, “I need to be competitive” – I was trying to figure out which would I could be a Paralympian in.” Some participants returned to an adapted version of their former sport, while others found a new parasport in which they could excel. An extensive degree of personal *autonomy* was important for encouraging parasport participation, empowering athletes to capitalize on opportunities and create their own space for success. Participants also described experiences of *engagement* (i.e., something to focus on, a feeling of freedom) and *challenge* (i.e., being pushed outside one’s comfort zone), which were attributed to ongoing *mastery* (i.e., enhanced confidence and physical skill) in parasport. For example, Roscoe went on to say:

I think [parasport] now is a huge part [of my life], ‘cause it’s like helped me become more independent and satisfied with something, and like it’s given me goals, like I used to have. Like it’s interesting looking back, I’m using track now to kind of get back the person I was before... Like I really want to get on the Canadian team and like, be like, good at sport again, you know, like I used to.

Nonetheless, the path to sustained participation and performance was not linear; there were several ‘ups and downs’ in the quantity and quality of participation post-injury, corresponding to the need for continued medical care (e.g., surgeries, prosthetics) whilst training or simply finding the right fit with a new parasport.

Considering the worth these athletes had attributed to their physical bodies pre-injury, participants viewed their participation in high performance parasport as a means of recovering the identity they had formed as an able-bodied person. The participants who drew on this narrative used parasport participation as an aid in their recovery and rehabilitation, working towards the most functional (or able) body possible. They expressed a desire to prove to society that they could continue to be high performance athletes, despite their disabilities. While the *meaning* of their participation revolved around identity and performance, so did the notion of

belonging. Within several of the other narratives, belongingness was a key element of quality sport experiences, conceptualized in terms of interpersonal connections and social acceptance. In contrast, participants in the ‘holding on’ narrative described what it means to belong as a function of their physical competence, placing little value on the social aspects of their parasport participation. In the words of Brittany: “It was nothing to do with anyone else on the team at all...I just felt like I’m the weakest link here, I don’t deserve to be here on merit.”

Letting Go

One of the life histories stood alone, representing a narrative type named ‘letting go’. Tom was an older retired man who had acquired a physical disability in his 60s. While the ‘from ordinary to extraordinary’ and ‘holding on’ narratives were framed around performance, the stories Tom told about his experiences in sport reflected the antithesis of a performance narrative (Douglas & Carless, 2006). Actively resisting opportunities for competitive involvement in parasport, Tom’s narrative can be summarized as: “For me, parasport is about more than competition; it’s about having fun, letting loose, and developing the tools to lead a successful life”. For example, Tom describes the nature of his participation in parasport:

I just try to participate. But I know there’s one or two, one chap in particular that would rather see me on the provincial team, but honestly, that’s not my thing right now...I don’t want to get into performance because I’ve been there... and I’ve done what I want to do. I want to enjoy [parasport], that’s the difficulty. That’s I guess the one, if there’s a negative about it, that’s the one negative. I don’t want to get involved with a performance sport or yah...I just enjoy [parasport]. That’s the element that’s really missing when there are so few people and when you are being coached by a group of coaches that want to perform, it’s because they want to form the provincial team and go to the nationals, so it’s that, that feeling of, of competition all the time. Competing for the wrong reasons.

As an able-bodied youth and young adult (i.e., ages 10-30), Tom was heavily involved in many recreational and competitive sport activities. Into adulthood (i.e., ages 30-50), Tom shifted his focus toward building a career and a family. Consequently, his sport involvement dwindled.

In his 60s, Tom experienced a spinal cord injury. Following rehabilitation, he was introduced to parasport through a provincial organization that supports people with disabilities. He continued to participate in parasport once a week for recreational and social purposes – refusing invitations to compete at a higher level. Tom also became heavily involved in his community; for example, working with several disability-focused groups and organizations. *Challenge* and *mastery* played a key role in shaping the *meaning* that Tom attributed to his participation in sport and parasport. According to Tom, “the most important characteristic of success is to develop a sense of confidence... [and] sports has been a big, *big* part of that for me...it’s a very, *very* important part of forming your character and success in the future.” Additional elements were highlighted specifically in relation to his experiences in parasport. For example, Tom described *engagement* as a “positive high” that accompanied the satisfaction of self-improvement and performing well. That being said, Tom believed that there was an over-emphasis on performance in contemporary parasport; he claimed that fun and enjoyment were the “missing links” for people with disabilities. Tom preferred opportunities to have fun and “let loose” while working on personal goals, without the pressure of formal competition. His involvement in parasport also encompassed *belongingness*, allowing opportunities for participation alongside people with and without disabilities. For Tom, participation meant more than competition or performance; it empowered him with the tools to lead a successful life and contribute back to the community, all while enjoying himself.

Embracing Change

Seven of the life histories drew on a narrative type described as ‘embracing change’. The participants who told this story were four men and two women with disabilities acquired early in adulthood (e.g., ages 18-30), primarily from spinal cord injuries. ‘Embracing change’ was

informed by two existing sport and disability narratives: discovery and quest, respectively. In a discovery narrative, sport is just one aspect of a complex and multifaceted life (Douglas & Carless, 2006). Alternatively, individuals who structure their lives around a quest narrative “accept impairment and seek to use it” (Smith & Sparkes, 2005, p. 1099), guided by the belief that there is something to be gained from the experience (Frank, 1995). Through their participation in parasport, participants sought to discover themselves and the world around them in their ‘new’ lives post-injury. ‘Embracing change’ can be summarized as follows: “Learning to live with a disability, participation in parasport has provided a vehicle for exploration and discovery. Through parasport, I am able to take the road less travelled – creating a unique and fulfilling path in life.” For example, Fred reflects on why he participates in parasport:

There are so many benefits that came from my sports, I mean... obviously the health and physical stuff, but the people I met and the travelling I got to do kind of developed me that way. Something else that I really recognized about my sports too, umm when I was, I have go back a little, there was a year in there too that, what year was that? When I went and did a grad degree... So kind of through that, it taught me to recognize too, why I was into sport. Takes me back to the question of what were the benefits. One thing that I noticed with myself, and through the research that I did, was in a lot of ways, I personally, and a lot of other people who are involved in parasport, I was doing it in a lot of ways to beat my disability. Just to kind of show myself and show other people that just because I was sitting in a chair, didn't mean I couldn't go out and go hard at it and accomplish things and be a world class athlete.

All of the participants described a physically active childhood, steeped in both formal and informal opportunities for sport involvement. With the autonomy and relevant supports to move within and between sport activities, participants described *belongingness* as the primary motivator of able-bodied sport participation (i.e., enjoying time spent with friends). For these participants, sport was never an all-encompassing or unilateral dimension of their lives; it was but one of many moving parts. The most significant decline in ‘embracing change’ occurred when the participants were unexpectedly faced with the transition to life with a disability (ages 18-30). During rehabilitation, participants were introduced to parasport through peer mentors or

‘have-a-go’ days (~3-12 months post-injury). Within 6 to 24 months of their injury, all participants were regularly participating in parasport with the continued support of both able-bodied (e.g., family, friends) and disabled communities (e.g., teammates, mentors).

A combination of factors contributed to the progress of the narrative and the quality of participants’ experiences in parasport. First, participants had the *autonomy* to choose and sample different parasport activities until they found “the right fit,” as Carly put it. In doing so, participants were able to connect with and learn from other people with disabilities in a variety of contexts. Furthermore, participants were exposed to opportunities to participate alongside able-bodied friends and family, providing a sense of normalcy and healing. These diverse experiences in parasport offered varying dimensions of *belongingness*. Finding “the right fit” often meant finding an activity that was intrinsically rewarding and produced enjoyment (i.e., *engagement*), provided physical and psychological *challenge*, and allowed opportunities for *mastery* and self-improvement. Some participants preferred recreational participation, while others sought higher levels of competition. Regardless, participants strove to balance their participation among a myriad of life domains – from education and career, to family and friends. Through parasport, these athletes were able to prove to themselves and others that they don’t have to “blend in with all the wheelchairs,” as stated by Henry. Their identities were shaped not only by who they were prior to acquiring a disability, but by the potential they saw in the life they were living *with* impairment (e.g., a means self-validation and reinvention). Participants used their participation in parasport to explore the complexity of the physical, psychological, and social dimensions they experienced in their lives post-injury, and shape who they wanted to be moving forward.

Meta-Theme: Feeling Equal and Valued

The need to feel equal and valued reflected a common theme influencing the quality of athletes' participation in parasport. All of the participants possessed strong athletic identities and desired to be taken seriously in their status as an athlete. For example, Evan expressed frustration with a parasport league that would not allow formal competition: "It was just what people forget is yes we may be disabled but we still want to compete...like we want to actually play [parasport] and keep score and not be like 'good try' and it's a tie." While some participants did not want to be seen as 'heroes' for taking part in an activity that able-bodied people may take for granted, other participants were strongly motivated to reach their physical potential. Being viewed as legitimate athletes meant that parasport participation was an ordinary aspect of participants' lives – as a hobby, career, or anything in between. Parasport produced a 'level playing field' for many participants; they felt like valued members of a community that not only encompassed, but extended beyond their disability and athletic identity. According to Brittany, a professional athlete and Paralympian, "the athlete needs to feel that they're valued as a person beyond their performance" in an ideal sport environment. When feelings of equality and value occurred along with the experiential elements of participation, participants felt that the overall quality of their participation experiences were enhanced.

Discussion

Through narrative inquiry, the unique aim of this paper was to explore the meanings that people with physical disabilities attribute to the quality of their participation in parasport throughout the life-course. This study advances theoretical understandings of participation in parasport by honing in on the subjective or experiential aspects of participation that make an activity feel valuable or meaningful. A timeline approach to data collection and analysis further enabled a perspective on participation that temporally reflected participants' experiences,

providing more than simply a “snapshot” of what quality participation meant to participants at one point in time. These findings both support and extend existing conceptualizations of participation (e.g., Hammel et al., 2008; Martin Ginis et al., 2017), while building on the sparse body of literature concerned with parasport participation (e.g., Shirazipour et al., 2017).

The resulting narrative types offer support for the six experiential elements of participation (i.e., autonomy, belongingness, challenge, engagement, mastery, and meaning) identified through a review of the participation literature (see Martin Ginis et al., 2017). Several of these elements have also been supported within the few studies that have sought to explore the physical activity and sport experiences of people with physical disabilities (e.g., Day & Wadey, 2016; Shirazipour et al., 2017; Turnnidge et al., 2012). However, extending the research, we also propose that for researchers to understand the complexity of quality we should move away from the essentialist and ontologically flawed quest to answer ‘what *is* quality’ to generative questions like ‘what can quality *do* and *become* over time’. As part of this, and without forgetting the pre-discursive effects of quality, the use of a narrative approach helps enable a perspective on participation that was inherently temporal in nature – a dimension that narrative research can uniquely capture given that stories not only represent human experiences in and through time, but also show how quality is developed in sport over time. It was revealed that the presence of these elements was not consistent, static, or discrete (i.e., not all elements were identified in each narrative type). The existence or importance of each element fluctuated over time and in response to different contexts. Consistent with the findings of Hammel et al. (2008), there were individual differences in the way each element was experienced and how important each element was for contributing to quality experiences in parasport. The general sentiment among participants was that quality participation means “finding the right fit” – that is, the activity that

suits their needs or interests best (e.g., someone who values the social aspect but dislikes the competitive pressure of sport participation may prefer to participate in a recreational team sport league). Finally, experiential aspects that were able to produce a feeling of equality and value within the parasport community (or more broadly) were amplified as important contributors to quality participation (e.g., fostering respect and dignity; Hammel et al., 2008) – thus, reinforcing the capacity for social justice that full and effective participation has to offer.

Further extending the participation literature, the meanings that participants attributed to each of the experiential elements were variable and different across the narrative types.

Narratives represent and constitute people's experiences and realities, thus providing a medium for action (Frank, 2010; Smith, 2015). In terms of understanding participation, the actions that participants took in working towards quality parasport experiences were often shaped by the specific meanings associated with each narrative type. That is, what narratives do for people is help shape what quality means to them. In doing this, each narrative type helps constitute a distinct understanding of the elements or themes that comprise quality. For example, belongingness was conceptualized differently within each of the three central sport narratives originally represented by Douglas and Carless (2006). Belongingness meant *social status* in the performance narrative, *social acceptance* in the relational narrative, and *a sense of community* in the discovery narrative. Athletes who drew on a performance narrative thus used physical competence and social comparison to achieve belongingness; alternatively, athletes who fell within relational or discovery narratives experienced belongingness as a product of the interpersonal relations fostered within parasport. As such, future work should not reduce belongingness – or other themes like autonomy – to a single understanding, but should rather appreciate and capture the different understandings associated with quality participation.

More broadly speaking, characteristics such as gender and disability type may have predisposed individuals to a particular narrative type. These differences have been supported in other areas of the literature, including physical activity initiation and maintenance among men and women with spinal cord injuries (Smith, Papathomas, Martin Ginis, & Latimer-Cheung, 2013) and disability self-concept among individuals with congenital and acquired disabilities (Bogart, 2014). In terms of representing and facilitating quality parasport experiences, promotional materials for parasport programs, and the programs themselves, may be more effective when targeted to particular demographic groups. Moving forward, we can draw on existing sport and disability narratives to better understand the meanings of quality and participation, and the impact of these narratives on social functioning.

The dominant discourse in parasport is shaped by the notion of a “supercrip” – someone who overcomes impairment to achieve unlikely success (Silva & Howe, 2012). The supercrip narrative reinforces the view of disability held by the medical model; specifically, the view that disability is a personal tragedy that needs to be rectified (Goodley, 2016). The narrative types ‘from ordinary to extraordinary’ and ‘holding on’ were shaped primarily by a performance narrative (Douglas & Carless, 2006), in which participation offered a sense of legitimacy and purpose derived from one’s ability to succeed and objectively perform in a (para)sport context. Performance was perceived as an individual responsibility – proving oneself to others as either “normal” or “superior” in spite of impairment. As such, the performance narrative reinforces both the supercrip identity and a medicalized view of impairment. While participants viewed their participation as socially progressive, these narratives may actually exclude or marginalize individuals who do not identify with the supercrip concept (Smith et al., 2016). Consequently, social oppression remained largely unchallenged. By resisting the performance narrative, the

narrative type 'letting go' exemplified feelings of exclusion and mounting frustration with performance-driven parasport programming.

Countering the performance narrative, athletes who drew on a relational narrative told stories that revolved around other people (Douglas & Carless, 2006). By emphasizing interpersonal relations and dependencies, the relational narrative supports the view that disability is socially constructed and structural barriers within society form the root cause of disability (i.e., the social model of disability; Oliver, 1990). As demonstrated within 'a Cinderella story', the relational narrative was typically associated with poorer quality sport experiences and reduced motivation to participate, thus drawing attention to the negative implications of oppression within participants' participation. Embedding disability within social relationships or structures – and not the individual – informed a perspective on disability that recognized social oppression in parasport contexts (Smith & Perrier, 2014). Although social oppression was recognized, it was not challenged until participants drew on a discovery narrative. 'A Cinderella story' and 'embracing change' were structured around a discovery narrative (Douglas & Carless, 2006), which offered a balanced and multi-dimensional alternative to the performance and relational narratives. Narratives of discovery were not about overcoming disability; rather, they were about living *with* disability. By viewing impairment as an integral and unchanging facet of one's identity, these stories represent counter-narratives to the more dominant discourse surrounding disability and parasport. By opposing the medical view (i.e., disability is an individual problem) and drawing on the social model (i.e., disability is socially constructed), these narratives informed a critical and complex perspective on disability.

The narrative types 'a Cinderella story' and 'embracing change' support a social-relational model, in which disability is understood through the relational practices (i.e., bodily

reality, social restrictions, cultural discourse) that shape experience (Smith & Perrier, 2014). These stories affirm the complex array of factors that influence disabled identities and empower parasport athletes to resist oppression in its many forms, beyond individual responsibility (Smith et al., 2016). Discovery narratives also provide support for a human rights model – directly addressing the call to action within the United Nations’ (2006) *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. By positioning people with disabilities as subject to the disabling practices of society, the human rights perspective advocates for the facilitation of fundamental human freedoms (e.g., full participation in society, including sport; Townsend, Smith, & Cushion, 2016). As a whole, the narrative types presented within this paper have important implications for understanding discourse within parasport culture, and promoting alternative ways of thinking about parasport participation through a social justice lens.

In practical terms, narratives of parasport participation offer unique perspectives on athlete development and what it means for athletes to participate. Narratives that challenge or expand the dominant discourse may appeal to a broader range of people than narratives that reinforce the prevailing school of thought, thus supporting participation beyond “superhuman” aspirations (Silva & Howe, 2012). With the aim of getting more people physically active or engaged in parasport, for example, these narratives could be used by public health agencies or parasport organizations to create messages or campaigns that promote a holistic view of participation. These messages may also be an important medium for raising awareness, reducing stigma, and promoting inclusivity among the general population (e.g., Taube, Blinde, & Greer, 1999). Furthermore, current athletes may be more likely to sustain participation if practitioners (e.g., coaches, instructors) are able to foster elements that support feelings of equality and value in a contextually-appropriate manner. By expanding the narrative repertoire available for people

with disabilities, as well as the individuals and organizations that support them, we may address both the quantity and quality of participation in parasport.

That being said, we must acknowledge some important limitations and their implications for the interpretation of this work. First, these narratives are not complete – the trajectory and experiences of participation for each of these participants continued beyond the time of the interview. Relationally speaking, future outcomes are impossible to predict and may not align with the current findings. Furthermore, the vast majority of people who participated in this study had experienced what they perceived to be ideal participation in sport; thus, by retrospectively looking back on their participation they may have discussed their lives in relation to parasport through “rose-coloured” glasses. At a broader social level, the consequences of each narrative were rarely viewed in a negative light by the participants who drew on those narratives. Consequently, it is important to stress that we are not prescribing a particular way of thinking about parasport participation; rather, we are expanding the menu of narrative resources from which past, present and future athletes may choose (e.g., Smith et al., 2016). From a human rights perspective, many athletes may be unaware of the extent of ableism that exists in parasport. Promoting alternative participation narratives may build awareness and challenge oppression with the aim of achieving full and effective participation in sport (and society) for all.

In conclusion, this paper explored the parasport participation narratives of athletes with physical disabilities, both supporting and extending existing conceptualizations of ‘full and effective’ participation. It has shown that diverse meanings of participation lead to different ways of achieving quality in parasport, while elements contributing to quality parasport experiences are also varied, dynamic, and fluid over time. Considering these findings, we would like to open up avenues for further discourse on the topic of parasport participation. Generally speaking,

731 more research is needed to broaden understandings of athletes' experiences in parasport, and
732 how these experiences are situated within the broader context of participation and social justice.
733 Provided that the participants interviewed for this study largely conformed to the traditions and
734 values of contemporary Western culture, researchers may wish to explore more culturally diverse
735 representations of parasport participation. The gendered nature of participation narratives or
736 differences based on disability type and self-concept also represent fruitful avenues for future
737 research. Throughout such investigations, we suggest that researchers move away from the
738 question of 'what is quality' to explore more generative questions, like 'what can quality do for
739 athletes with disabilities' and 'how might quality be developed over time'.

References

- Adriansen, H. K. (2012). Timeline interviews: A tool for conducting life history research. *Qualitative Studies*, 3, 40-55.
- Atkinson, P. (2015). *For ethnography*. London: Sage.
- Bogart, K. R. (2014). The role of disability self-concept in adaptation to congenital or acquired disability. *Rehabilitation Psychology*, 59, 107-115.
- Cachia, M., & Millward, L. (2011). The telephone medium and semi-structured interviews: A complementary fit. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, 6, 265-277.
- Day, M. C. (2013). The role of initial physical activity experiences in promoting posttraumatic growth in Paralympic athletes with an acquired disability. *Disability and rehabilitation*, 35, 2064-2072.
- Day, M. C., & Wadey, R. (2016). Narratives of trauma, recovery, and growth: The complex role of sport following permanent acquired disability. *Psychology of sport and exercise*, 22, 131-138.
- Douglas, K., & Carless, D. (2006). Performance, discovery, and relational narratives among women professional tournament golfers. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*, 15, 14-27.
- Frank, A. W. (1995). *The wounded storyteller: Body, illness, and ethics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Frank, A. W. (2010). *Letting stories breathe: A socio-narratology*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Frank, A. W. (2012). Practicing dialogical narrative analysis. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium,

- 777 *Varieties of narrative analysis* (pp. 33-52). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- 778 Goodley, D. (2016). *Disability studies* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Sage.
- 779 Hammel, J., Magasi, S., Heinemann, A., Whiteneck, G., Bogner, J., & Rodriguez, E. (2008). What does
 780 participation mean? An insider perspective from people with disabilities. *Disability and*
 781 *Rehabilitation*, 30, 1445-1460.
- 782 Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashiach, R., & Zilber, T. (1998). *Narrative research: Reading, analysis and*
 783 *interpretation*. London, UK: Sage.
- 784 Martin Ginis, K. A., Evans, M. B., Mortenson, W. B., & Noreau, L. (2017). Broadening the
 785 conceptualization of participation for persons with physical disabilities: A configurative
 786 review and recommendations. *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, 98,
 787 395-402.
- 788 Martin Ginis, K. A., Latimer, A. E., Arbour-Nicitopoulos, K. P., Buchholz, A. C., Bray, S. R., Craven,
 789 B. C., . . . Wolfe, D. L. (2010). Leisure time physical activity in a population-based sample of
 790 people with spinal cord injury part I: Demographic and injury-related correlates. *Archives of*
 791 *Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, 91, 722-728.
- 792 Martin Ginis, K. A., Ma, J. K., Latimer-Cheung, A. E., & Rimmer, J. W. (2016). A systematic review of
 793 review articles addressing factors related to physical activity participation among children and
 794 adults with physical disabilities. *Health Psychology Review*, 10, 478-494.
- 795 Oliver, M. (1990). *The politics of disablement: Critical texts in social work and the welfare state*.
 796 Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan Press.
- 797 Perrier, M. J., Strachan, S. M., Smith, B., & Latimer-Cheung, A. E. (2014). Narratives of athletic
 798 identity after acquiring a permanent physical disability. *Adapted Physical Activity*
 799 *Quarterly*, 31, 106-124.

- Schinke, R. J., Stambulova, N. R., Lidor, R., Papaioannou, A., & Ryba, T. V. (2016). ISSP position stand: Social missions through sport and exercise psychology. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 14, 4-22.
- Schwandt, T. (1997). *Qualitative inquiry: A dictionary of terms*. London, UK: Sage.
- Shirazipour, C. H., Evans, M. B., Caddick, N., Smith, B., Aiken, A. B., Martin Ginis, K. A., & Latimer-Cheung, A. E. (2017). Quality participation experiences in the physical activity domain: Perspectives of veterans with a physical disability. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 29, 40-50.
- Silva, C. F., & Howe, P. D. (2012). The (in)validity of *supercrip* representation of Paralympian athletes. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 36, 174-194.
- Slater, D., & Meade, M. A. (2004). Participation in recreation and sports for persons with spinal cord injury: Review and recommendations. *NeuroRehabilitation*, 19, 121-130.
- Smith, B. (2015). Narrative analysis. In E. Lyons & A. Coyle (Eds.), *Analyzing qualitative data in psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 202-221). London, UK: Sage.
- Smith, B., Bundon, A., & Best, M. (2016). Disability sport and activist identities: A qualitative study of narratives of activism among elite athletes with impairment. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 26, 139-148.
- Smith, B. & McGannon, K. R. (2017). Developing rigor in qualitative research: Problems and opportunities within sport and exercise psychology. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1080/1750984X.2017.1317357
- Smith, B., Papathomas, A., Martin Ginis, K. A., & Latimer-Cheung, A. E. (2013). Understanding physical activity in spinal cord injury rehabilitation: translating and communicating research through stories. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 35, 2046-2055.

- Smith, B. M., & Perrier, M. J. (2014). Disability, sport, and impaired bodies: A critical approach. In R. Schinke & K. R. McGannon (Eds.), *The psychology of sub-culture in sport and physical activity: A critical approach* (pp. 95-106). London, UK: Psychology Press.
- Smith, B., & Sparkes, A. C. (2005). Men, sport, spinal cord injury, and narratives of hope. *Social science & medicine*, 61, 1095-1105.
- Smith, B., & Sparkes, A. C. (2009). Narrative inquiry in sport and exercise psychology: What is it, and why might we do it? *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 10, 1-11.
- Smith, B., & Sparkes, A. C. (2016). Introduction: An invitation to qualitative research. In Smith, B. & Sparkes, A. C. (2016) (Eds). *Routledge handbook of qualitative research in sport and exercise* (pp. 1-7). London, UK: Routledge.
- Smith, J., & Deemer, D. (2000). The problem of criteria in the age of relativism. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 877-896). London, UK: Sage.
- Sparkes, A. C., & Smith, B. (2014). *Qualitative research methods in sport, exercise, and health: From process to product*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Sport England (2017). *Active People Interactive* [Active People Survey Analysis Tool]. Available from <http://activepeople.sportengland.org>
- Taub, D. E., Blinde, E. M., & Greer, K. R. (1999). Stigma management through participation in sport and physical activity: Experiences of male college students with physical disabilities. *Human relations*, 52, 1469-1484.
- Townsend, R. C., Smith, B., & Cushion, C. J. (2016). Disability sports coaching: Towards a critical understanding. *Sports Coaching Review*, 4, 80-98.

- 845 Turnnidge, J., Vierimaa, M., & Coté, J. (2012). An in-depth investigation of a model sport
846 program for athletes with a physical disability. *Psychology*, 3, 1131-1141
- 847 United Nations (2006). Final report of the ad hoc committee on a comprehensive and integral
848 international convention on the protection and promotion of the rights and dignity of
849 persons with disabilities. Retrieved from
850 <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>
- 851 Wiggins, S., & Potter, J. (2008). Discursive psychology. In C. Willig, & W. Stainton-Rogers
852 (Eds.), *The sage handbook of qualitative research in psychology* (pp. 73-90). London,
853 UK: Sage.
- 854 World Health Organization (2001). *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and*
855 *Health (ICF)*. Geneva: World Health Organization.

Highlights

- Five distinct narratives of parasport participation are identified
- The narratives support and extend existing conceptualizations of participation
- Elements that contribute to quality participation are diverse, dynamic, and fluid over time
- Diverse meanings of participation lead to different ways of achieving quality in parasport
- Narratives that challenge or expand dominant discourse may increase quantity and quality of participation